Date: 12/2/74

To: Commission on the Organization of the Government
for the Conduct of Foreign Policy
Attention: Tom Reckford

From: Harry Howe Ransom,
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Subject: Evaluation of Papers "Intelligence Functions"
and "Intelligence and Policymaking" by
William J. Barnds

In my evaluation I deal with both papers as a single unit. What I judge to be the basic issues are identified and each issue is discussed in terms of Barnds' analysis and opinions and my own judgments and opinions when they differ from those of Barnds. Finally, I will summarize my views on these issues.

My overall evaluation is that Barnds has identified the major issues. I find no major gaps in his analysis. It is on matters of judgment and his acceptance of the status quo that I find myself in some disagreement with his analysis. His analysis displays a tendency to support the status quo and to be sympathetic to existing structure and doctrine.

Basic Structure

1. (pp. 1-6)* It is probably true as Barnds suggests that the basic concept of a Central Intelligence Agency was to insure an intelligence analysis institution "with no direct policy

*All page number references are to Barnds' paper entitled "Intelligence and Policymaking in an Institutional Context."

responsibilities and thus no departmental positions to defend." But it may also be true that the anti-Communist ideology of Allen Dulles dominated the agency in its formative years, leaving an indelible mark on its structure and functions. The OSS wartime mentality was shifted from the World War II scene to the Cold War. Thus the CIA tends to remain a war agency--a sentinel on duty guarding against surprise military attack and making its analyses in a friend-enemy atmosphere. In other words the CIA was militarized at an early age and perhaps has never adequately recovered a balanced perspective.

The problem may be symbolized in terms of the most recent choice of Directors. The current director is a person whose primary background has been in covert operations; the appointment was made at a time when quite a different symbolic gesture was needed.

Ten years ago I wrote in Can American Democracy Survive Cold War? (p. 135) that "Perhaps nothing is more important to world peace today than to close the gap between the distorted image and reality in both the White House and the Kremlin." My point then, as now, is that a distorted image may result from the war-like, sentinel mentality in the CIA, resulting in selective perceptions that have magnified dangers and intensi-

fied Cold War tensions. In the process this perpetuates a similar attitude on the Soviet side, escalating the secret war.

As Barnds puts it, "Even today the U.S. intelligence community's efforts are focused heavily upon military considerations and towards discovering and evaluating potential military threats." Perhaps it is possible to "discover" military threats that do not really exist. Put another way, a paranoid search for threats usually finds the anticipated threats by distorted or selective perception.

Barnds concedes that the changed American foreign policy of new relationships with Russia and China "have increased the difficulties facing intelligence analysts in recent years." This would seem to confirm the condition in which the CIA is uncomfortable in a non-war situation. In the process, true dangers--resources, energy, food, population, technology, are overlooked.

To clarify the main point here: basic assumptions about world political relationships will fix the purpose and then guide the organization and functions of the intelligence system. If a war system is assumed, one organizational result follows. If a peace system is assumed, another. Barnds does not give sufficient emphasis to this basic problem.

Intelligence Requirements

2. (pp. 7-16) The requirements/collection of data issue can be stated simply. There appears to have been a tendency since the early 1950s for the intelligence system to engage in a vast, world-wide "vacuum cleaner" operation, sucking in facts indiscriminately from all parts of the world. These data or facts have, figuratively, been stored in vast government warehouses, classified as TOP SECRET, and, by their great volume, have overwhelmed efforts at analysis.

Thus the issue: whether this is so and whether a more efficient requirements and collection strategy needs to be developed? It is likely that the vast overcollection of information is the result of proliferation and duplication of intelligence agencies, particularly in the military.

More thoughtful effort, at very high administrative levels, needs to be given to requirements/collection strategies or to the simple question: What do we need to know for the future? Here is a place where greater use might be made of the academic community. Perhaps a greater investment needs to be made in research on futures. And possible this can best be done outside.

This is the point at which to suggest the idea that deserves serious consideration: towards the goal of better

requirements/collection/research strategy, 10% of the total annual budget of the Intelligence Community should be allocated outside the government--to research institutes and University Centers--to fund intelligence related research. Such research initially might be devoted to the question: What do we (the U.S. Government) need to know about the external world in order to cope with the future? Particular emphasis should be placed on basic research towards predicting and coping with probable futures that will confront the United States in world politics. The annual sum that might be devoted to this might exceed $500 millions- a very substantial amount! But this 10% of funds allocated for strategic intelliegnce research outside of government might help insure genuine national security in the uncertain world of the future. Surely 10% would be wasted if spent in traditional ways within the government. An outsider like myself cannot make specific suggestions in this regard. But it is hoped that the general idea will receive serious attention.

Proliferation of Functions

3. (pp. 16-21; 27-28) The next issue is whether there has been too great a proliferation of intelligence agencies and functions and whether, in essence, the CIA has become "just one

more intelligence agency" instead of the central coordinating and digesting organization as originally conceived, independent of the bureaucratic empires of the regular line departments.

Related to this question of basic organization are several corollary points:

(a) I believe that Barnds underplays the degree of damage done to CIA's image by its involvement with covert operations. I have just received a letter from a former student enrolled in a major graduate program in the east. He reports that in informal conversation with his peers, he learns that a possible future association with CIA (even for a summer internship) is regarded by some as a professional "kiss of death." I believe this overstates the problem, but it exists as a deterrent to the development of first-rate analytical talent in the CIA's professional staff.

(b) Some see as a second problem the "distance (both organizationally and physically in view of its location at Langley) from the policy-making process." Yet this distance is part of the original concept of a Central Intelligence Agency. On balance I believe that the advantages of this outweigh the disadvantages. But, in order that this concept work according to the ideal model, policy makers must give adequate

intelligence requirements guidance and they must know how to use intelligence wisely.

(c) The existing system, a compromise between centralization and independent autonomy, is probably too much of a compromise, producing a confederation allowing too much free-lancing, "end-running" and manipulation of the separation-of-powers system (by side plays to various Congressional committees).

Essentially the issue is: how much diversity of intelligence agencies is desirable? I believe that Barnds overvalues the advantages of diversity. Greater centralization may be desirable, with built-in devices insuring against any tendencies towards over-centralization. I doubt that Barnds is correct when he suggests that "intelligence community" is a reality rather than an aspiration.

The Limits of Intelligence

4. (pp. 22-27) The next issue centers on the question of the distinction between the knowable and the unknowable. Perhaps the central problem here, to be understood by intelligence producers as well as users, is the need for clearer consensus about what can be empirically known and about what can only be estimated or speculated about. Furthermore it needs to be

better understood that even if one could know "all the relevant facts" prior to a decision, this would not necessarily eliminate the need for hard choices. There may be a tendency of intelligence professionals to over-rate their estimating capacities. And there probably is a tendency for intelligence users to act as their own intelligence men. Barnds' sound analysis of this part of the problem may not make sufficiently sharp distinctions among basic intelligence/current intelligence/estimates.

It is important to keep in mind what Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter, an early Director of Central Intelligence, once described as the main limitation of intelligence:

> Its job requires the systematic and critical examination of intelligence information, the synthesis of that information and the determination of the probable significance of evaluated intelligence. [But] to predict the intentions of the enemy, you would need a crystal ball.

Finally it should be recognized that there is the constant danger that policy makers will want to use intelligence staff and intelligence professionals for their own policy preference or even partisan ends. The system should be organized so that the dangers of distance from policy makers, creating atendency to irrelevance, are weighed against the dangerous use of intelligence for partisan political ends. There may be a fine point between too much policy guidance and too little.

In general, I have a negative reaction to the abolition of the office of National Estimates. While the creation of National Intelligence Officers may solve the problem of gap between producer and user, it is likely to be ultimately at a cost in objectivity. Knowledge is power and power tends to be used by "men of power" for their own ends. Barnds probably underrates the dangers of policy makers using intelligence for their own subjective or partisan purposes.

Dealing with the Unfamiliar

5. (pp. 29; 30-41; 44-46) In returning to the issue of establishing requirements for collectors, Barnds' analysis is generally sound. It may be, however, that his analysis is marred by insufficient attention to the tendency of the intelligence system to deal with the familiar dangers or events and in the process ignore the likely (but unfamiliar) events. Here again I return to the suggestion that in determining intelligence requirements a greater input from intellectual resources outside the government would be beneficial. This might be good insurance against the danger of ignoring the likely in favor of the familiar.

Independent Audit and Control

6. (p. 41) Barnds notes in passsing the role of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. The functions of this Board have not been fully discussed in the Barnds paper. But its composition, function and effectiveness could be a major factor in the functioning of the intelligence community and in its coping successfully with many of the issues raised above. But the PFIAB has not seemed to be an effective force for an improved intelligence community. The important, vital point here is the President's personal interest in the composition of PFIAB and most important his close working relationship with the chairman of PFIAB. Most Presidents have seemed to neglect this important relationship. A reconceptualized, reconstituted, and refurbished PFIAB may be one effective way of dealing with the sensitive problem of external controls over the intelligence system.

Conclusions

I see the most basic issue of all to be how one conceives the problems that face the decision process. Put very simply, if the problem is seen to be a perpetual war to contain world Communism, particulary the U.S.S.R., one organizes a certain kind of agency for intelligence and covert operations and

stipulates a certain set of intelligence requirements. One price of this conception may be the permanent perpetuation of a wartime organization. On the other hand, if one conceives a peace rather than a war system, with economic and social problems transcending big-power competition, one organizes a different kind of intelligence system, with different requirements, and perhaps abolishes or reassigns covert political functions.

The major organizational weaknesses of the intelligence system of the past twenty years have resulted from lack of clarity of purpose and a strong tendency to operate on a war system concept.

Finally, in response to the two papers as a whole, I set forth my own views of some basic issues:

(a) I believe that covert political operations and clandestine para-military operations should be removed from the operational jurisdiction of the Central Intelligence Agency.

(b) I believe that Congress should establish a Joint Committee on Foreign Intelligence Activities.

(c) I believe that the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board should be reconstituted and strengthened in concept, organization and functions.